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IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

BY THE VERY REV. G. GRANVILLE BRADLEY, D.D., DEAN OF
WESTMINSTER.

IN THE summer of last year a large number of the leading representatives of various societies of American engineers were cordially welcomed and hospitably entertained in London by the well-known Institution of Civil Engineers, of which the chief founder was Thomas Telford, and which for fourscore years has had enrolled among its presidents and members the most distinguished names in the annals of British engineering and mechanical science. Among the various modes of entertainment provided for their guests by the president and council of the Institution was a visit to Westminster Abbey—a pilgrimage which few educated Americans would be willing to omit. As the number of visitors was far too large to be conducted in a single group through the various portions of the Abbey, it was suggested by the Dean of Westminster that the whole party should be invited to meet him in the Chapel of Henry VII., and that he should there endeavor to bring before them such of the historical and sacred associations of the chapel, and of the great church of which it forms a part, as were most likely to impress so unusual and so interesting an audience. It was, no doubt, the first occasion in the history of that far-famed chapel on which so large a party of educated Americans had met together beneath its roof. The following pages, which embody the principal topics that would naturally be brought before such visitors at such a time and in such a place, may be of interest to a wider circle than that to which the address referred to was originally delivered.

It was, I think I may venture to say, by a happy accident that the thought suggested itself, some months ago, of inviting the American representatives of a great profession to meet the present guardian of Westminster Abbey in the Chapel (as we are

accustomed to call it) of Henry VII.* It was not easy to realize at the moment the full and significant, the almost strange, appropriateness of the place, which was named, in the first instance, mainly on the ground of its being at once convenient and interesting to such honored visitors. I shall have no difficulty in convincing an American reader that it would have been hard to select, after the most careful consideration, a spot so singularly suggestive for such a gathering. Let him think for a moment of the time† at which its walls were raised, when they and that wondrous roof took the place of the humbler and narrower "Chapel of Our Lady" which had stood for nearly three centuries as an adjunct to the great church hard by, and which was destroyed as ruthlessly by Henry VII. as was the Norman fabric of the Confessor, within two centuries of its completion, by Henry's ancestor, the third of that name. It was a time that marked the transition from those middle ages—to which belonged both the church of the Confessor and the stately fabric which took its place—to the modern world of which Americans and Englishmen are alike the children.

It is not merely that the style of architecture of that Tudor age is in almost every detail, as in its general effect, wholly different from that which the visitor leaves behind him as he passes within its open gates. But from the moment that its first stone was laid, at the beginning of the eventful sixteenth century, to that of its completion, some years after its founder had been laid in his grave beneath its floor, the air of England and of Europe was full of the germs of changes whose results, so manifold, so far-reaching, were as yet quite unrecognized. The old world was in travail: what its progeny should be it knew not. The shrewd, suspicious, and cautious sovereign who designed and raised the fabric could not read the future. Infinite were the pains he took to provide for perpetual masses to be sung for his soul, "while

* Strictly speaking, the Chapel of Henry VII. is a lady chapel, or chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and, as such, is attached to the eastern extremity of the church of the monastery, or abbey, of Westminster, which was itself dedicated to St. Peter, and by a time-honored misnomer is popularly called "The Abbey." Such a chapel had been added to the Norman church of Edward the Confessor in the early part of Henry III.'s reign, nominally by the King, but mainly by the exertions of Richard de Berkynge, abbot from 1222 to 1246. The original lady chapel was, therefore, the oldest part of the abbey church, as it existed when Henry VII. came to the throne.

† The first stone was laid January 24, 1503. The walls and roof were, no doubt, completed by 1509, in the April of which year the King died.

the world shall endure,"* by monks whom, a generation later, his son and successor was to disinherit. He crowded the walls of the building that bears his name with the effigies in stone of early and mediæval saints,† whose worship was soon to be forbidden, whose very names were to be half-forgotten. Almost his last offerings to adorn its altar were two gifts that spoke of unabated credulity in an age when an Erasmus was already branding with gentle scorn all such spurious specimens of the bones of saints or of more sacred relics. A so-called leg-bone of St. George,‡ a few so-called drops of the Saviour's blood, were to give a special sanctity to the altar which was to be raised above his grave.§ Yet within a walk of a few minutes from that very spot a Caxton|| had already carried to completion his work at his printing-press, within the Abbey precincts, in the almonry of the great Benedictine Monastery of which that historic church was but a portion. He had already placed in English hands the results of the great invention that by slow degrees was to bring all literature and all knowledge within the reach, not of the few, but of the many, and which, by diffusing a knowledge of Holy Scripture and by familiarizing the mind of the coming age with the stirring thoughts of the leaders and teachers of mankind, was to play such a mighty part in the awakening of the conscience and intellect of the world.

It was a time when the keels of the little ships of the Genoese Columbus had already ploughed the waters of a new world—need I say with what momentous results? Already from the port of Bristol the Venetian Cabot had penetrated the icebergs of Labrador up to the very coast of America.¶ Before the roof of Henry VII.'s Chapel was completed the merchant fleets of the golden age of Portugal had doubled the Cape, and their flags were flying in the ports of India. Balboa was soon to climb the

* See the indentures between the King and the abbot and convent as given in Neale.

† Of these no less than ninety-five still remain.

‡ See extract from Henry VII.'s will. "Our grate pece of the holie crosse . . . and also the preciose relique of oon of the leggs of Saint George, set in silver parcel-gilt." Quoted in Nichols's edition of Erasmus's "Pilgrimages."

§ *I. e.*, the Jesus altar, which was to be placed at the east end of his tomb.

|| Caxton's press was set up in 1471 under Abbot Millyng. His chief friend was Abbot Esterey, 1474-1498.

¶ Columbus died while the chapel was building, A. D. 1506. The date of Cabot's voyage from Bristol was 1497 A. D.

heights from which he could look down on the waters of the Pacific. Cortes,* with his handful of adventurous Spaniards, was to cross the Atlantic and master the feeble civilization of Mexico.

Already, in short, those mighty changes were in progress which in due time were to shift the central highway of commerce and civilization from the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean, and which in due time, also, were to work out the transformation of England from the home of a pastoral, agricultural, and military race to that of a swarming, industrial, maritime, and colonizing population. A silent teaching was being mutely preached, even while those walls were rising, which was to lead her no longer to waste her strength in misleading efforts to realize her dream of supremacy in France, as still symbolized in the *fleur de lys* on these entrance gates,† but to train her to fulfil her true destiny, and to become the fruitful mother of free and mighty nations. I need not dwell on other impending changes; on that other birth with which the age was in travail; how the calmer voices of the English Colet and of the Dutch Erasmus,‡ as one or the other smiled sadly at the jewelled relics of the shrine at Canterbury, or sighed for the day “when the weakest woman should read in her own tongue the word of God,” or pleaded against the multiplication of councils and dogmas, and in favor of setting Christ himself in the place which the church had usurped—how these were soon to be lost in the thunder of the voice of Luther, or drowned in the din of all the fierce and far-reaching struggles of the Reformation era.

They have, one and all, left their traces around the visitor who stands on that chapel floor. There, in the vault of its founder, beneath the tomb and effigies which we owe to the master hand of Torregiano, sleeps the James, King at once of England and of Scotland, to whose reign we owe, with all its incalculable results, our English version of the Bible. There, at the head of the same vault, lies beneath the altar§—once desecrated, now restored—the

* Balboa, 1513. Conquest of Mexico, 1519-21.

† The *fleur de lys* of France is conspicuous among the interesting devices on the gate of the Chapel of Henry VII.

‡ See Green's “History of England,” pp. 299, 306; also, Nichols's edition of Erasmus's “Pilgrimages.”

§ The high altar of the chapel was the last of the three works carried out by the Italian artist, Torregiano, who had already completed the tomb and effigies of Henry VII. and his Queen, and that of Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond

body of the Protestant boy-King, the founder's grandson, Edward VI. He was laid in his grave with no mediæval dirge and Latin requiem, but with the then unfamiliar words of our now familiar burial service. The solemn "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," was to pass from the lips of the Cranmer with whose preaching the pulpit so near his grave is traditionally associated, and who was soon to follow his young King to the unseen world through the gate of a death of torture.

I hope I have not lingered too long over thoughts impossible to repress in connection with those to whom a visit to such a spot must have a special interest,—visitors shall I call them, or pilgrims?—whose homes lie beyond an ocean that no longer estranges; men and women who share our ancient memories, and whose fathers for centuries breathed the air, and rested at last beneath the soil, of our own island home. No spot in that great Abbey can be to them more deeply interesting.

And now it may be worth while to point out to any reader such as these a few of the more direct and less general associations of this same chapel, in which he may imagine himself to be seated. As he passes within its open gates, with their ornamental work of ancient bronze, he may read something of the ideas that filled its founder's brain as he designed and planned it. There he may pause for a moment to decipher the symbols that still tell, not only of the idle dream of recovering the throne of France, which he claimed as being the grandchild of the daughter of France, the widow of its conqueror, Henry V., but of something far more real and far more substantial. In that Portcullis of Lancaster, that Fetterlock of York, may be read the peaceful union of the two rival houses of York and Lancaster, the close of the Wars of the Roses, in which the feudal baronage of England had dashed itself to pieces in savage battles, in ruthless slaughter, and on bloody scaffolds. Few of us but can recall Shakespeare's*

"shadow like an angel, with bright hair
Dabbled in blood,"

or the mother's lament over her two "unblown flowers," cut off so

and Derby, in the south aisle. It was placed beneath a canopy, supported on four pillars, with an angel at each corner, displaying "the instruments of the Passion." It was probably completed in 1519, and was destroyed in 1643 under the direction of a committee appointed by the Long Parliament to demolish "monuments of idolatry." The altar as it stands was replaced in 1879.

* "Richard III." Act. i., Sc. 4; *id.*, Act iv., Sc. 4.

early, whose bones still lie in the compass of one urn in "the Innocents' Corner" in the northern aisle. High up on the same gates, as in the eastern window, stands the device of the crown placed on the thorn-bush that spoke of the kingdom as won neither by inheritance nor yet by marriage, but by "the judgment of God,"* on the field of Bosworth. So on the fair "closure" that surrounds the founder's tomb we may observe the dragon that silently asserts the claim of the son of the Welsh Tudor to share the blood of the mythical King Arthur and of the ancient British monarchs. We may remember also, as we examine that monument of Torregiano's art, that the three coffins underneath it mark the long-delayed and peaceful consolidation of the whole island in which our fathers lived—a consolidation marked by the accession to the throne of England first of a Welsh and secondly of a Scottish king. And from this grave we may pass with redoubled interest to the ancient chapel of the Confessor in the great church below, where for three centuries hung, hard by the shrine of the meek royal saint, the golden circlet torn from the head of the last Welsh king, and the "stone of fate" wrested from untamable Scotland by the Edward who sleeps so near it; and whatever blood runs in our veins, Scottish or Welsh or English, we may feel that this chapel breathes a message of peace to all those ancient symbols of the discord of centuries.

But these are mere fragments of the associations that swarm around the visitor to this Tudor chapel. Here in its northern aisle lie side by side the coffins of two sisters—the great Elizabeth, whose memory is cherished in the name of the State of Virginia, and the unloved and unhappy Mary. There in its southern aisle, close to the kneeling figure of her murdered husband, Darnley, is the effigy of the Mary, Queen of Scots, whose death-warrant Elizabeth signed. Their spirits are with the Father of all spirits: their bodies rest beneath the same roof in this "temple of reconciliation and peace." There in the same grave sleeps, amidst the wreck of the Stuart race, the Prince Rupert whose headstrong charges broke in vain against the steadfast courage of Cromwell and his Ironsides. Beneath the feet of those who tread this floor still sleeps the much-loved daughter of Cromwell,† amidst the

* "The crowne which it pleased God to geve us with the victorie of our enemy at our first fælde." Henry VII.'s will.

† Elizabeth Claypole, buried August 10, 1656.

graves of kings—of the Cromwell who was laid to his rest in kingly pomp beneath its eastern window. Hard by, and side by side with the Stuarts from whom she sprung, lies the ancestress* of the House of Hanover. Almost in its centre sleeps the Hanoverian King, George II., his dust mingling with that of the good Queen Caroline. Beneath the same pavement are the graves of one after another of the same dynasty; among them that of the Cumberland who broke the hopes of the Stuarts on the bloody moor of Culloden. These are only some of the memories which this chapel evokes. It covers the dust alike of Charles II., of William III. and of Queen Mary, and of Queen Anne, her husband, and their offspring. Yet I cannot turn from it without reminding my readers that it includes among its treasures the grave of my beloved and lamented predecessor, the Arthur Stanley who was as dear to the heart of America as to that of England, or without calling attention to the window that he raised to the memory of his wife, herself of the race of the Robert Bruce of Bannockburn, where the sun setting in the far west still speaks of a tie† that bound them to lands and communities that lie beyond the ocean.

And which shall I mention of the innumerable points of interest in the great church itself, through which the visitor will pass as he leaves this chapel? Shall I speak of the graves of its early kings, where, round the shrine that holds the bones of the Confessor, sleep—not, as here, in vaults beneath the pavement, but above ground in their marble tombs—the third Henry, who raised that church of such peerless beauty and built that “incomparable” chapter-house; the Edward whose trophies torn from Wales and Scotland I have just mentioned; his grandson, the third Edward, who began the century of long and terrible wars with France; the ill-starred Richard II., whose youthful portrait still hangs upon our walls, and whose bones were at last brought to their long home by his remorseful conqueror; the fifth Henry, above whose headless effigy still rises the fair chantry raised to his memory by the wife and child from whom Death so soon divided him, and still hang the shield and helmet and saddle

* Elizabeth, wife of the Elector Palatine, eldest daughter of James I, grandmother of George I.

† Lord Elgin, Lady Augusta Stanley's brother, was Governor-General of Canada from 1846 to 1855. Her second brother, Sir F. Bruce, was for some years a representative of Great Britain at Washington.

that tell of the day of Agincourt? There, too, rest at last the bones of his wife, the descendant of St. Louis, from whose second marriage sprung the father of the first Tudor king, of whose work here we have already spoken.

I must not linger over these memories of an unforgotten past. But I may remind those who enter that great church by its northern transept that they tread, perhaps unconsciously, on the dust of statesmen who bear names as familiar to Americans as to ourselves; of a Grattan, a Castlereagh, of two Pitts, and of Charles James Fox. Above them rise the statues not only of a Peel, a Beaconsfield, a Palmerston, the three Cannings, but one commanding figure with arm outstretched looks down upon the visitor as he passes through the northern entrance. It represents the dominating figure of the middle period of the last century, of the epoch of which the great transatlantic republic was the latest birth; the statesman whose greatness is identified with the expansion of Great Britain. It is the Chatham to whose sagacity we owe the choice of Wolfe and the end of that strife that was decided on the Heights of Abraham. You may see him there, that maker of the greatness of a greater Britain, with eagle countenance and eager gesture, as though still not merely hurling defiance at his country's foes, but uttering his memorable pleading for what he believed to be the righteous cause of the yet unborn republic beyond the seas.

As we pass from the Tudor chapel to that northern transept, we may pause before the huge and towering memorial of the dying Wolfe; of him to whose dear-bought victory we might almost say that we owe the momentous—let me use once more the word—the momentous result that English—not French—is the speech, English—not French—the race, of the masters of North America. Or if we cross then towards the southern transept, we may stay our steps at the spot where, from the days of the Norman Conqueror, every sovereign of England has received the crown; and we may pause for a moment at the place where our Queen, honored in America as in her own realm, gave thanks amidst her children and her children's children, and surrounded by 10,000 of her people, for fifty years of beneficent rule. We may pass onwards by the bust of Dryden to the bust of Longfellow, dear to England as to his own people. All around us are the graves or the memorials of poets, of writers, and of thinkers,

from the tomb of Chaucer, who was laid to rest five hundred years ago, to that of Charles Dickens, into whose still open grave poor men and women and children threw their offerings of summer flowers, scarcely twenty summers before these pages will appear.*

A few steps will lead us from Poets' Corner to the nave. There, amidst the memorials of gallant soldiers and sailors, whose stubborn heroism built up in later days the English empire, we shall notice the monument of André, with its fair crown of American autumn leaves, symbolizing the healing of the long-past bitterness of an almost civil strife. There, too, we may note the one spot on consecrated English walls that contains an effigy of Washington. Thence we may cross to the monument—removed of late in order to be placed within the reach of every American visitor—of the young Howe who fell on the march to Ticonderoga; raised to him by a grateful "Province of Massachusetts" not yet divided from the realm of England. Or we may enter the dim baptistery and, above the effigy of Wordsworth, the bust of Keble, and the memorial of the blind Fawcett, raise our eyes to the window placed in memory of two sacred poets† of this his mother-land by a citizen of Philadelphia.

It would be easy to say much more that would have a special interest for visitors to the Abbey from that great republic whose territory seems to us—shut within the narrow limits of our four seas—almost boundless, and whose population is already five times greater than was that of this island two centuries ago. I would only remind the citizens of the United States that the link which enables you to bind together in one nation under one government that vast republic, came to you, we might almost say, as a legacy from these very precincts. Enter that "incomparable" chapter-house, among whose storied windows is one that bears the stars and stripes that mark it as a gift from your own country, and you will place your feet upon the floor where for three centuries met the "knights and burgesses" of England. You

* Charles Dickens was buried in Poets' Corner at an early hour on June 14, 1870. The funeral was, in accordance with the urgent injunctions of his will, strictly private. The grave, however, was, by Dean Stanley's desire, left open for the day, and was soon filled with wreaths and flowers, largely contributed by visitors of the humblest class.

† The window to the memory of George Herbert and William Cowper was the gift of Mr. Childs, of Philadelphia.

will see before you the very nursery of the first-born child that embodied the then novel conception of representative government—the very cradle in which was rocked the institution that has become the august mother of many parliaments in many lands.

And yet I have not said one word of the great profession a visit from whose American representatives to the Abbey of Westminster suggested these remarks,—a profession whose mighty progress has done so much, even in the memory of men still living, to change the material and influence the moral condition of the whole civilized world. It is enough to remind all members of that body that here, too, in this great Abbey they may visit not only the graves of a Newton, a Herschel, a Lyell, and a Darwin. They will find the gigantic statue of a James Watt in a strange proximity, so characteristic of the place, to the grave of the standard-bearer of Henry V. and the restored tomb of the chamberlain of the seventh Henry. Or they may pass by the monument of a De Vere to the statue of Telford, builder of bridges, maker of highways, leader for a while of English engineers; and, near Telford's grave, they may stand by the gravestone of Robert Stephenson, or pause beneath the windows raised to the memory of Brunel and Locke and Stephenson and Siemens, and last of all to that of the Cornish genius, Richard Trevithick.

Enough has been said. A building whose historical associations, apart from its legends and traditions, extend in an unbroken line through eight centuries, and through which the current of English history has flowed, leaving traces at every generation on its walls and floors, may excuse some prolixity in a vain attempt to touch even a very few of its leading features. Through all that time it has been, still is, and I trust may long remain, no mere house of tombs, no mausoleum, or museum, or Walhalla, but a Christian church, the house of God, sacred in the eyes of thousands as the national sanctuary of our race. The famous chapel that marks its eastern extremity was once consecrated to the worship of her whom men then hailed as the Queen of Heaven; whom we are content to honor as the human mother of our Saviour Christ. You may see even now on its western wall some tokens of that ceremony of consecration of "this Chapel of Our Lady," as its founder called it. For ages the roof of the greater church, itself dedicated to the Fisherman of the Galilean Sea, rang to daily and nightly services, chanted in Latin

by black-cowled monks, or to Latin masses celebrated by gorgeously-vested priests. For three long centuries our English liturgy has been in daily use. If, as is natural, but a limited number of worshippers are usually present at its morning services, you may see its seats well filled at a later hour, and crowded to excess at every service on the Lord's Day; and you may hear the sound of the familiar English hymn pealed forth by hundreds of voices of reverent worshippers, gathered from all parts of our own kingdom and of the English-speaking world.

May it long serve many uses ! May it gather together earnest seekers after God, and aid them by spoken words, by devout worship, by inspiring music, in lifting their thoughts to a world unseen ! And may it continue to awaken in thousands, who under our own and far-off skies speak our tongue, a growing interest in its ancient memories; a sense of all we owe to times long left behind; a sense that among God's best gifts to man is that of the example and the leading and the teaching of mighty genius and of surpassing goodness ; of those who have received largely and rightly used those high gifts which come down from the Father of lights, the Giver of every good gift and every perfect gift, in whom, whatever the changes that Time works on human history, is no variableness nor shadow of turning !

G. G. BRADLEY.